THE GOVERNMENT'S METHOD OF DESTROYING COUNTERFEITS

Bad Metallic Money Melted in a Blast Furnace, Together With All the Captured Plates, Dies, Presses, and Other Similar Material—Paper Counterfeits Cut Into Strips and Then Macerated, Emerging From the Machine in the Form of a Soft Paper Pulp, Which Is Much Used in Molding Images of the Washington Monument and Others Objects of Interest to Sightseers in the National Capital.

THE accumulation of counterfeit coins in the Treasury of the United States at Washington, representing the "captures" of the Secret Service officers, has amounted in the last year to exactly $31,223.96. Supposing that the officers of Uncle Sam's sleuth department capture practically all of the counterfeit coins that are produced (and this supposition is probably not far from correct) the ratio of bad metallic money to good (genuine) metallic money is as $1 to $4,000. This is a rough estimate, and is based on the fact that the Government mints during the last year have produced upward of $125,000,000 in the good coin of the realm.

The relation of counterfeit paper money to genuine paper money is probably about the same; so, it would appear that the business of making counterfeit money is not, from the standpoint of the counterfeiter, "just like finding it."

Nevertheless, counterfeits have been made ever since the Government was established, and will continue to be made until the millennium arrives. Accordingly, a large staff of men are employed by the Treasury Department constantly to bring the counterfeiters to justice, and as soon as counterfeit money comes into the hands of the Government officers the most scrupulous care is taken to preserve it carefully until a sufficient quantity is accumulated to call for its destruction according to the rules and regulations of the department.

This destruction takes place about once a year. A few days ago about five tons of this contraband stuff was destroyed by order of Secretary Shaw. The paper stuff is burned, unless it happens to be in the form of bank notes and Treasury notes of such elaborate and painstaking workmanship that it is calculated to deceive the public when it appears in the circulating medium of the country. In that event—and there is always a considerable quantity of these notes—they are ground up in a kind of huge sausage machine called a "macerator," in the basement of the Treasury Building in Washington.

The metallic counterfeits, together with all the plates, dies, presses, and other similar material captured from counterfeiters by the Secret Service officers, are melted down in a blast furnace either at the Washington Navy Yard or at some iron foundry. The recent destruction of spurious coin and paraphernalia of counterfeiters was effected at Schneider's foundry, in Washington.

This year's "destruction committee" consists of Samuel Wallace, C. E. Corwin, and George C. Flenner, trusted officials of the Treasury Department. The "destruction committee" is appointed by the Secretary of the Treasury each year to examine all the counterfeit material captured by the Secret Service Bureau. Wherever a Secret Service detective makes a "haul" of counterfeit stuff he forwards it to Washington by express, and each article is carefully examined and then labeled and numbered in the office of Chief Wilkie.

The stuff is then stored away. The coin and notes are placed in a safe. The more bulky material, such as dies, plates and printing presses, are stored in a carefully guarded room in the Treasry Building. Sometimes it is necessary to keep the materials for a long time, for use in courts as testimony to secure the conviction of criminals.

"Destruction Committee."

But when the stuff ceases to be of value for this purpose, and after a year's supply has accumulated, the Secretary of the Treasury appoints a "destruction committee," and the contraband materials are burned, macerated or melted, according to the character of the material.

The burning of miscellaneous counterfeiters' matter, such as "flash paper" and other stuff, takes place in the basement of the Treasury, the materials being thrown into the furnace from which the building is heated. The destruction of this matter, however, is conducted with scrupulous care, in order to guard against any of the matter being abstracted, either with dishonest intent or for the purpose of preserving as "souvenirs."

Similar care is taken in the destruction of coins at the iron foundry. The metallic stuff is loaded into a wagon and driven under guard to the foundry. At the foundry the melting down of the matter is superintended by the "destruction committee" and at least one detective of the Secret Service Bureau. When the annual melting took place the other day a great street crowd was attracted to the place under the impression that the foundry was on fire.

With the coins and other matter were a large number of electrotype plates, from which the wood "backing" had not been removed. The wooden material in the blast furnace made a big blaze, under the abnormal conditions of draft, and the flames leaped several feet above the top of the smokestack. The conglomerate mass of metal which results from the melting down of counterfeit coins is turned over to the foundry.

It is of little value except as junk. It would be idle to speculate upon the exact composition of this melted stuff. It contains lead, copper, zinc, brass, iron, and a little—mighty little—silver. There may sometimes be a little gold, but it is safe to say that if a man had a hundred tons of this residue and was able to extract whatever gold there was in it, he would not have enough of the precious metal to buy a breakfast. Small quantities of the base metallic composition are sometimes given away by the Treasury officials, molded into the form of paperweights and other trinkets.

The destruction of paper money is more interesting, possibly, than that of the coin. The counterfeit notes are tied up in packages and carried to a room in the north end of the Treasury building. There each package is placed by a skillful operator under a huge descending knife which is part of a machine used in destroying counterfeits.

The "Sausage Machine."

After the notes have been cut into narrow strips by this machine, the pieces, carefully counted and guarded, are carried to the macerating room. The macerating machine has been not inaptly described as a "sausage machine." It is fully four feet in diameter, and stands as high as a man's head.

The counterfeit notes are thrown into a sort of hopper at the top, a cover is closed over the stuff, and the machine is operated by power from the engine room in the Treasury building. Water is also used in the machine, and the result of the operation is a wet, gravish pulp. Not until this pulp appears does the vigilance of the Treasury officials cease.

Pulp Molded Into Images.

The pulp cannot possibly be used for any illegal purpose known to the counterfeiters, and it is thrown into the dump, or is given away to persons who mold it into images of the Washington Monument, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing and other objects of interest to sightseers, and sold as souvenirs on the street or from the hotel newstands.

In the coins and paper notes destroyed this year were a number of famous collections. The remainder of the contraband stuff captured from the notorious Brockway gang of counterfeiters was destroyed. A quantity of this had been held for two years, in order to secure the conviction of other criminals.

Produced Foreign Notes.

There was also a quantity of notes captured from the notorious John Alfred Skoog. This man shot himself on the street in New York some time ago, at a time when, being hard pressed by the police and Secret Service men, his capture was imminent. He had been a counterfeiter for many years, and had served a term or two in the penitentiary.

He was a skillful maker of "queer" money, and he did not confine his operations to imitating the money of the United States. He produced some clever reproductions of Swedish and Danish notes, and was at one time making a counterfeit of the notes of the Bank of Scotland when he was arrested.

Imitations of Silver Certificates.

A part of the stuff captured from the Johnson brothers, of Detroit, was also destroyed. These men made the famous imitations of the silver certificates, of the denomination of $2, bearing the Hancock and Windom heads.

An interesting part of the collection of stuff annually destroyed is the so-called "flash" material. This is usually matter made by persons in good faith, without any object of criminal deceit, but merely for exhibition as curiosities.

Laws Are Now Very Strict.

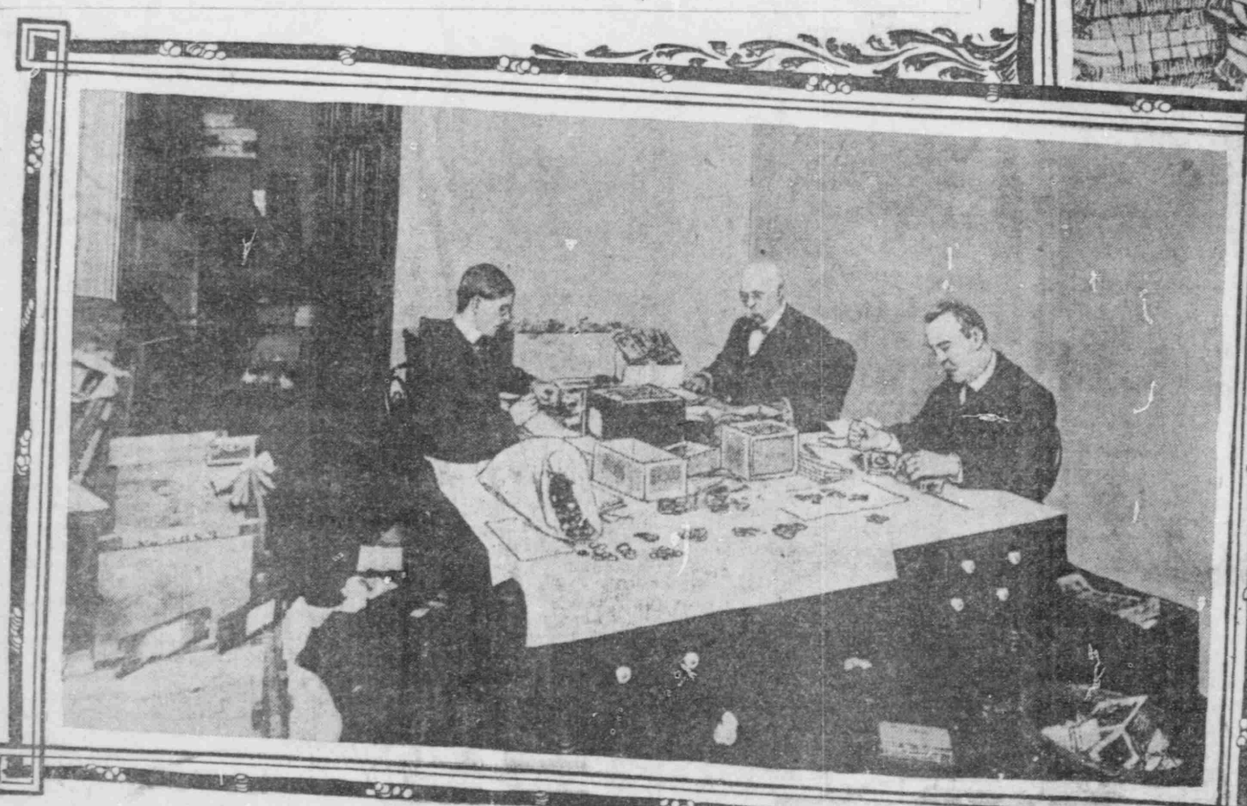
The laws relating to counterfeiting are now so strict, however, that remotest imitation of Government money is not allowed. Advertising schemes, innocent in themselves, have had as their basis the imitation of Confederate notes and United States paper money. These are under the ban of the law.

Such matter is always seized wherever it appears, and the producers of it are sometimes punished. Clever paintings of banknotes and coins are sometimes made for decorating the walls of saloons and other public places.

Valuable Paintings Seized.

Sometimes these paintings are really valuable in themselves, but they are invariably seized. In Chief Wilkie's office hangs among other curiosities an oil painting representing three barrels filled to overflowing with bank and Treasury notes of all denominations. The painting is so clever a reproduction of the original notes that a careless observer—if any observer could be careless upon witnessing such a sight—would at first take them for real money.

CUTTING COUNTERFEITS IN HALF.



EXPERTS EXAMINING BILLS.

PUNCHING HOLES THROUGH BAD BILLS.

ANECDOTES ON MEN AND WOMEN PROMINENT IN THE PUBLIC EYE

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON was in Philadelphia recently, and to a group of reporters there he told, one evening, an anecdote of his boyhood.

"At the plantation where I was a slave," he said, "a very choleric old Southerner was staying. His valet was an aged colored man, and very funny it was to hear the woebegone replies that he would make when his old master stormed at him.

"The storms were frequent enough. One of them I remember arose over a mislaid bootjack.

"'Dagon,' the master said, 'you are good for nothing. You are a rascal. You are a numskull. By gad, Dagon, I wish you were in h—l.'

"'I wish I was, sah. I wish I was,' Dagon replied."

MISS ALICE ROOSEVELT spent a good part of last summer at Dark Harbor, an island on the Maine coast. The cats of Maine with their long, soft, thick fur, like the fur of the Angora, pleased her. She resolved to buy one of them.

Accordingly, perceiving one day a beautiful kitten in a farm garden on Lexuticook Road, Miss Roosevelt got out of her carriage, accosted the farmer, and asked what he would sell the kitten for.

The farmer studied her face closely for a moment. Then he said:

"The price o' this yere cat is $20."

Miss Roosevelt, with good reason, was amazed.

"What," she said, "are Maine cats as scarce as that?"

"No," said the farmer, "but Alice Rooseveltses are."

DR. W. W. KEEN, of Philadelphia, the surgeon who wrote recently to Senator Gallinger a striking open letter in defense of vivisection, has the hobby of collecting anecdotes of physicians. These anecdotes he preserves in scrap-books and in costly extra-illustrated volumes, and sometimes he reads selections from them at medical festivals.

"The most common medical anecdotes," said Dr. Keen recently, "suggest that the physician is a murderer. All such stories are as old as the hills in their fundamental idea, though your modern writer puts them in new clothes. And they look ghastly in their new clothes, as ghastly as though you should array a corpse in fancy dress.

"A lawyer and a doctor were conversing. The doctor said: 'Your profession doesn't make men angels, sir.' The lawyer answered: 'No, it is yours which does that.'

"This anecdote, which is 2,000 years old," said Dr. Keen, "is reputed to be the parent of all the myriad of medical anecdotes that now exist."

PRESIDENT CASTRO, of Venezuela, was a close friend of the late William Potter, of Philadelphia, who had extensive business interests in South America. According to Mr. Potter, Castro is very fond of animals, and imputes to his pets the most remarkable qualities, telling of these qualities gravely, though not expecting, perhaps, to be altogether believed.

"I have a dog," President Castro sometimes begins, "and one day I saw my dog carrying a live hen carefully in his mouth. I paused to see what would happen. The dog placed the hen in his hut, and she immediately laid an egg there. He ate it, she helped herself to the most delicious bits in his food tray, and a few moments later departed. Thereafter I kept my eye on them, and I ascertained that the hen, whenever she had an egg to lay, laid it invariably in my dog's hut. And he would eat her graceful gift and he would reward her with her choice of all the viands on his platter. When she died he was inconsolable."

IN a suit he was defending some years ago, the late Thomas B. Reed vented his caustic wit with good effect upon a witness he was cross-examining.

This witness was hopelessly, incorrigibly stupid. He misunderstood the simplest questions, and it was impossible to get a direct answer from him. So, after a long while of futile effort, Mr. Reed sneered and said:

"Let me congratulate you, sir. You are a painstaking person. You must, indeed, have gone to great trouble in your time. No man was ever naturally so stupid."

PAUL HELLEU, the etcher of beautiful women, is not so young as he used to be, and this is a fact of which he hates to be reminded. Since his arrival in America a few weeks ago with letters of introduction from the Duchess of Marlborough, Helleu has been entertained by Mrs. Ogden Goelet, by Mrs. Astor, and by Mrs. A. G. Vanderbilt, so that his stay upon the whole has been pleasant. But his vanished boyhood was pointed out brusquely to him at a studio supper the other night, and he resented this. The guests were all smoking, and one man, a middle-aged person, got behind Helleu, pulled a hair out of his rather scant crop, and said, holding it up:

"One gray hair!"

Helleu was displeased. He watched his chance, and an hour later, when it came, he pulled a hair out of the other man's head.

"One black hair!" said Helleu, displaying it.

MRS. RUSSELL SAGE recently achieved a good deal of prominence in the newspapers through her refusal to attend a dinner at which the men were to be allowed to smoke. Mrs. Sage spoke forcibly about the manners of men who would smoke in the presence of women. She speaks always, indeed, with great force. Many stories are extant of telling rejoinders she has made.

For instance:

She was interested in Santos-Dumont and his flying machine. She could not discuss the young aeronaut enough during his American visit. Her friends thought that she held an unreasonably high opinion of aeronautics.

One of them, accordingly, said to her:

"What good, after all, are these flying machines, Mrs. Sage? They are mere toys. They can't carry any freight or passengers. What good are they?"

Mrs. Sage glanced at the speaker. Then she said:

"What good is a new-born babe? And yet this babe becomes, in time, a great, strong man."

E. H. HARRIMAN, whose controversy with George Gould in the Northern Pacific-Great Northern plan has been much discussed of late, had some years ago a valet named Banks.

Banks was in a hundred ways an oddity. He took snuff, he wore a wig, he sported a thumb ring, and in the depths of winter protected himself with neither gloves nor overcoat.

Mr. Harriman says that one morning when he awoke he found that Banks had neglected to call him, and that neither his shaving water nor his bath had been prepared. Accordingly he shouted:

"Banks! Banks!"

"Yes, sir," Banks shouted back.

"Banks! where are you?"

"I'm up in my room in bed, sir."

"Why, what do you mean by lying abed this hour in the morning? Come here at once!" Mr. Harriman stormed.

"I can't do it, sir." Banks cried lustily.

"Why can't you do it?"

"I can't do it, sir. I'm drunk, sir."

WHEN the late Frank Norris, author of the "Octopus," was a Harvard freshman he did not attend recitations as sedulously as the faculty desired. He had an aversion to mathematics and to one or two other of the dryer branches of learning, and was too frequently to be found, in pleasant weather, on a certain bench, under a certain elm, with pipe and book.

There was an instructor whose window looked down upon young Norris' favorite seat. One day this instructor, leaning far out, called:

"Mr. Norris, I never look out of this window but I see you idling down there on that bench."

Norris replied:

"Well, Mr. Blank, I never look up from this bench but I see you idling there at that window."